

## Fire meets its match

**Story and photos by Staff Sgt. J. Justin Pearce**  
Staff Writer

July 11, afternoon — a small subdivision in Keesler seems peaceful on the outside.

On the inside of one particular house on the corner, the worst has happened.

As the door swings open, firefighters from the 403rd Civil Engineering Squadron rush into the house as fast as smoke rushes out. Around the house, the back door opens from the inside and illumination from a flashlight pierces the dense smoke.

Out of the haze two firefighters emerge with a “victim.” They carry him a few hundred feet away and gently lay him down at the temporary treatment shelter set up by other team members during the rescue.

As Tech. Sgt. Paul Williams checks the victim for a heartbeat, two other firefighters are closing in fast with another victim. They make room for the second casualty and begin CPR.

Back in the house, firefighters are making a secondary sweep to check for any remaining occupants.

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(Previous Page) Dashing to the fire hydrant, Senior Airman Julian Carl Slaughter, a firefighter with the 403rd Civil Engineering Squadron, quickly attaches a fire hose to supply his team with the water needed to extinguish the "simulated" fire during a structural fire exercise. Airman Slaughter and other 403rd firefighters participated in this and other exercises during the July UTA.

(Right) As firefighters from the 403rd Civil Engineering Squadron prepare to enter a smoke-filled house during a "simulated" house fire, Airman 1st Class Nicholas Decoronado gets jolted back a couple inches when water bursts out of the fire hose after he and firefighter Tech. Sgt. Kermit Watson switch it on to test it for water capability before entering the house.

(Below)

As smoke rolls out the back door of the house, firefighters Tech. Sgt. Larry Tait and Tech. Sgt. Donald Buchanan emerge out of the dense haze carrying a "victim" away from the house to the rescue area to begin CPR.



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Outside, a switch is flipped, and the blades of a fan ventilating the house slow to a halt.

Firefighters exchange "high fives" and "good jobs" - their exercise was a success.

During July, more than 20 firefighters from the 403rd CES demonstrated their capabilities by handling the house fire after participating in this particular structural fire exercise, as well as taking on an aircraft fire exercise, both held in conjunction with Unit Compliance Inspections.

"These (exercises) went exceptionally well. These guys are a phenomenal group of individuals," said Senior Master Sgt. Pete Dickerson, fire chief of 403rd Fire and Emergency Services. "They pulled together all the experience they've gained from practicing a year out, and they applied it. I knew they had it in them, we just haven't been in a situation where we could show how polished we are - until now."



Two "victims" were rescued from the simulated house fire and taken about 200 feet away where firefighters immediately began on-the-scene first aid.

(Left) Tech. Sgt. Paul Williams checks his victim for a heart-beat, and then administers first aid. (Below) After establishing a heartbeat, Tech. Sgt. Keith Myrick puts an oxygen mask on his victim and awaits the arrival of the Emergency Response Technicians. After the victims were rescued, 403rd CES firefighters ventilated the house and performed a secondary search before returning to the fire station to await their next mission.

